

REMARKS

STATUS OF THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-4, 9 and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,298,768, ("Okazaki") in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,316,208 ("Kobayashi"). Claims 6-8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Okazaki and Kobayashi and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,507,049 ("Yeager"). Claims 10-11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Okazaki and Kobayashi and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,99,810 ("Hatano"). Claim 5 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103

Applicants respectfully do not agree that originally presented claims 1-4 and 6-12 are unpatentable based upon the various combinations of Okazaki, Kobayashi, Yeager and Hatano. However, in an effort to advance the prosecution of this application, Applicants have amended claim 1 to include the allowable subject matter of claim 5 and, thus, obviate the asserted rejections. Applicant reserves the right to argue the patentability of originally presented claims 1-4 and 6-12 over the art of record at a later time.

By this amendment, Applicant has added the allowable subject matter of claim 5 into independent claim 1. Therefore, amended claim 1 is believed to be allowable for at least the reasons stated in Office Action, paragraph 6.

Each of claims 2-4 and 6-12 depend ultimately from claim 1 and, thus, necessarily contain the allowable subject matter embodied in claim 1. For at least this reason claims 2-4 and 6-12 are believed to be allowable.

**CONCLUSION**

Applicant respectfully submits that this application is in condition for allowance, and reconsideration and allowance of the application is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that prosecution might be advanced by discussing the application with Applicant's counsel, in person or over the telephone, we would welcome the opportunity to do so.

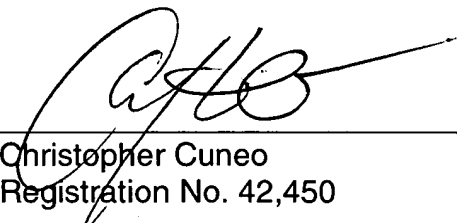
In the event any variance exists between the amount enclosed and the Patent Office charges, please charge or credit any difference to the undersigned's Deposit Account No. 50-0206.

Respectfully submitted,

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